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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 1761
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1763
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RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 1753
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 1712
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1650
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1719
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1496
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1488
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1281
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 1680
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 1732
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SUBJECT: TAJIKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN: LET THE FLOOD GATES OF WATER
COOPERATION OPEN

REF: DUSHANBE 1469

DUSHANBE 00001558 001.2 OF 003

¶1. SUMMARY: Senior Afghan water officials visited Tajikistan August 2-9 to discuss bilateral cooperation in developing joint projects along the Amu Darya and Pyanj Rivers, which form the Afghan-Tajik border. The highly successful visit initiated a practical dialogue and strong partnership between government officials, resulted in two draft Memorandums of Understanding, and fostered an optimistic and eager outlook on transboundary water cooperation which will help to integrate and develop the economies of Tajikistan and Afghanistan by harnessing hydropower and developing irrigation systems for commercial agriculture. Both governments strongly welcome the U. S. role in fostering technical capacity and political will in both countries towards resolution of complex and sensitive transboundary water issues.
END SUMMARY.

¶2. The First Deputy of Minister of Energy and Water, Kamullidin Nezami, accompanied by two Afghan advisors and two senior officials from Embassy Kabul's Afghan Reconstruction Group toured Tajikistan August 2-9 to meet with senior Tajik government officials and study strategic water development projects. Highlights among the delegation's many field visits included the site where the Afghans propose building a future irrigation and hydropower dam at the upper Amu Darya, after the Pyanj and Vaksh Rivers converge. The irrigation dam and 400 km canal siphoning water from the Amu Darya into northern Afghanistan could provide water to irrigate 500,000 hectares of land which would help introduce commercial agriculture in this remote corner of Afghanistan. (NOTE: This 1000 MW Upper Amu Darya hydropower dam is included in the Tajik schematic for developing the river, but has not been a high priority for the Tajiks prior to this visit. They place greater priority on developing hydropower stations at Dhesti-Jhum, Granite Gates and Roghun. END NOTE.)

¶13. In addition, the group visited the Chubek Canal along the Pyanj River which separates Tajikistan and Afghanistan and eventually flows into the Amu Darya. The Asian Development Bank is providing about \$22 million for stream bank protection and reinforcement with concrete structures to prevent massive flooding. Last year, floods destroyed homes and killed several people along the banks of the river. Similar needs exist on the Afghan side of the border, but so far the flood control projects are only on the Tajik side. Joint projects are required to avoid detrimental consequences for the Afghan side of the border.

¶14. The group also visited the proposed site for the Upper Darya Irrigation Diversion Dam which could be used to open large areas of Northern Afghanistan to irrigation. The Afghans would like this dam built in conjunction with the Dastki-Jhum Hydroelectric Dam, which would be the "Hoover Dam" of Central Asia (reftel).

The team visited various other irrigation diversion and control structures and the Nurek dam and hydroelectric power station, the largest rock-fill dam in Central Asia.

¶15. Meetings with Tajik officials including the Minister of Water, Abdurahim Nazirov, established a good working relationship between the two groups. Throughout the country, the Tajiks welcomed their Afghan counterparts with open arms, bestowed on them traditional Tajik gifts and of course treated them to the requisite large lunch and dinner feasts, one of which included five main courses of meat. In deference to their Afghan colleagues, the Tajik hosts served these meals without the usual vodka toasting. A shared language and common culture will help to facilitate communication and ease future exchanges of technical experts.

TWO MOUS ARE BETTER THAN ONE

¶16. Tajikistan's State Committee on Environmental Protection's Agency for Hydrometeorology drafted a draft Memorandum of

DUSHANBE 00001558 002.2 OF 003

Understanding for Nezami proposing the establishment of water gauging stations along the Amu Darya and Pyanj rivers. Staff gages and manual water measurements were once used, but the Tajiks have been unable to access the Afghan side of the border for manual measurements for the last 15 years. Water measurement is crucial for developing water allocation options between the republics and for planning of projects and implementing measures to prevent massive flooding, which takes lives, destroys homes, and erodes the river's banks causing millions of dollars worth of damage each year. Modern gauging stations will provide needed data for future projects such as large dams and irrigation diversion structures to regulate and manage the water flow. The two governments are currently negotiating the MoU's terms. No major hurdles are foreseen and it is expected that both governments will sign a final MoU in the near future.

¶17. The Tajik Ministry of Water and Land Reclamation is preparing an overarching MoU on joint cooperation for projects along the Amu Darya for Afghan consideration. The draft MoU will serve as a basis for future cooperation and will include items such as Tajik assistance in design of dams and structures and agreement to collaborate on future infrastructure projects along the Pyanj and Amu Darya. This point is particularly salient for the proposed Dastki-Jhum hydroelectric dam project. In order for the dam to be constructed and to be successful, both countries need to reach an official understanding of water use and sharing along the river. Afghan and Tajik officials also discussed submitting joint proposals to international financial institutions for development projects which would benefit both countries.

U.S. ASSISTANCE NEEDED

¶18. The United States plays a strong leadership role on water

sharing issues in Central Asia. In meetings with EmbOffs, Afghan First Deputy Minister of Water Nezami and Tajikistan's Minister of Water and Land Reclamation Nazirov both requested U.S. support in facilitating transboundary water cooperation. Afghanistan and Tajikistan do not have the technical or financial capacity to train specialists, develop legislation for water management, or pursue infrastructure projects alone. The United States can provide assistance by:

- Developing exchange programs to send Afghans and Tajiks specialists to the United States for technical training;
- Supporting specialists from the United States to work in Afghanistan and Tajikistan in advisory roles on water management issues;
- Providing political support for worthwhile joint proposals of project development along the Pyanj and Amu Darya River; and
- Identifying financial resources to fund dams, hydroelectric facilities, irrigation, water supply and management projects.

¶9. Transboundary water issues in Central Asia are politically sensitive. Afghanistan has no water sharing agreement with Tajikistan, Turkmenistan or Uzbekistan which will be necessary to prevent international conflicts over water in the Amu Darya. Dushanbe and Kabul have gotten off to a good start and with assistance from the United States should be able to develop practical bilateral water sharing agreements. Once this is done, Afghanistan and Tajikistan will be able to address the more complex issues of water sharing with Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. The Tajik Minister of Water and the Afghan First Deputy Minister for Water specifically requested U.S. assistance in facilitating long term regional agreements equitable to all countries.

¶10. Post considers this visit a significant step forward, particularly in terms of the South and Central Asian regional integration initiative. In a region beset by narcotics and terrorism, water has not always been at the forefront of policy

DUSHANBE 00001558 003.2 OF 003

or funding decisions. If Afghans and Tajiks can develop working relationships on water, we are confident they will be able to parlay those relationships to other sectors. The water cooperation will also help realize the region's hydropower potential and lead towards the economic integration necessary for long-term stability.

HUSHEK